

Australia, the land 'Down Under'

Australia is an island continent in the southern hemisphere between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is the smallest continent in the world, but the sixth largest country. Australia is called the land 'Down Under' because it is in the southern hemisphere.

A COUNTRY, A CONTINENT

Australia is the only country in the world that covers an entire continent. More than a third of the country is desert and much of it is uninhabited. 89% of Australians live in metropolitan cities such as Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, in the south and south-east, the temperate parts of the country. The desert interior, which Australians call 'The Outback', is hot and dry. The main activities are sheep and cattle farming and mining.

Very few people live there and outback Australians lead isolated lives. They communicate with the rest of the world by radio or computer.

Alice Springs is the largest outback town, with a population of about 27,500. It has become an important tourist centre because it is the point of departure for tours to Uluru (formerly known as Ayers Rock), one of the most impressive natural sights in Australia.



Warm up

1a What do you know about the geography of Australia? Circle the correct alternatives.

- 1 The capital city is *Canberra/Sydney*.
- 2 The population is about *21/51* million.
- 3 The island to the south of mainland Australia is the state of *Victoria/Tasmania*.
- 4 The Great Barrier Reef is off the *north east/north west* coast.
- 5 Eastern Australia borders the *Atlantic/Pacific* Ocean.

1b Check your answers on p. 139.

Reading

2 Complete these sentences.

- 1 Australia is an island
- 2 About 30% of Australia's land is
- 3 The main cities in Australia are
- 4 The main economic activities in Australia are
- 5 The climate in the centre of Australia is
- 6 Most of the mountains in Australia are in
- 7 About 25% of Australians
- 8 Australian English has its own